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AUTHOR Botor, Celeste O.
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ABSTRACT

Part of a larger, longitudinal study conducted from 1974 through 1979 investigating differences in the mother-child relationship among Japanese, Thais, and Filipinos, this paper reports findings on the Filipino sub-sample. Findings concern the socioemotional behavior of Filipino children, expectations of their mothers, extent of children's independence in basic routine activities, and their resistance to interference, enforcement, and scolding. A total of 144 mother/child pairs differing along urban/rural and social class dimensions participated in the study. Age of participating children ranged between 2 years, 3 months, and 3 years, 2 months. Findings indicated that the children expressed the emotions of frustration, anger, and fear. Discussion describes children's behavior when frustrated, angry and afraid, their social behavior, their independence, and their resistance to their mother's behavior. Class, urban/rural, age, and sex differences are discussed within the context of Filipino culture and society. Recommendations for programmatic intervention and further research are offered. (RH)

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Mother-child Relationships in Early Childhood: Japan, Philippines and Thailand

The Philippine Report

Dr. Celeste O. Botor
Professor and Chairman
Department of Educational Foundations
College of Education, U.P.

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To know the differences and similarities in mother-child relationships in Japan, Thailand and the Philippines that would throw insight on dependency-autonomy and obedience-resistance behavior of children a research was conducted from 1974-1979 in these three countries.

The three parts of the study are: 1) The interview of mothers about(a) basic behavior of their children: (locomotion, eating, playing, sleeping, urinating, bowel movement, putting on clothes, washing the hands or daily routines (b) social behavior: (ability to get along with other children in play, behavior about property, emotional behavior: (fear, anger, and frustration) and (c) socio-economic conditions; 2) The interview of mothers about child-rearing practices, family, environments and the mothers' aspirations for their children; and 3) The experiment with mothers and their children.

This paper limits itself to the findings regarding the socio-emotional behavior of the children and the expectations of their mothers and the degree of independence of the children in the nine basic routine activities and their resistance to interference, enforcement and scolding.

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Sampling

A total of 144 mother (m) and child (s) pairs (48 Urban Middle and 48 Urban Lower) from Manila and 48 Rural from nearby provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite and Laguna provinces were involved in the study.

Social classes of m (mother) and s (child):

Urban Middle - refers to: 1) Father's occupation: white-collar job worker hired by organization with regular salary or having private practice in a profession; 2) mother's education -- at least entered college even if not graduated.

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Urban Lower -- refers to: 1) Father's occupation: Unskilled worker or temporarily hired worker (with odd job); 2) Mother's education -- not more than 6 years compulsory education.

Rural area -- refers to:1) Daily frequency of transportation (bus or train) is less than 5 times. In case of greater frequency, the distance to nearby station is more than 4 kms.; 2) no educational institutions higher than compulsory education nor hospital nearby; 3) no facilities such as fuel gas from the main source, electric light, water service and telephone (except wire or public telephone).

Age of S:

Child's age range was between between 2 years, 3 months and 3 years, 2 months.

This section deals with the socio-emotional behavior of the children and the expectations of their mothers.

The children expressed emotions of frustration, anger, and fear. The ethnographic background of the children might have contributed to the ways they behaved as they did as perceived by their mothers. Children of different backgrounds exhibited similar behavior as though they were programmed to do so. Similar data, however, may mean differently due to different circumstances or unique situations.

Behavior When Frustrated - Children cried when utterly helpless in getting what they wanted (82.8%). More Rural children and more girls than boys from the three sample groups did so. Another evidence of frustration was the display of temper tantrums (40.6%) especially by the Urban children, although more children (60% did not show temper tantrum. When frustrated more of the Rural and Urban Middle children and more boys than girls gave up easily.

Behavior When Angry - Children of this age had very pleasant disposition. Although 99% of them displayed anger, they did so only occasionally (3.9%) with only a small number (2.8%) expressing anger often.

Urban Lower children (8.5% boys and 4.2% girls) registered a higher score on anger behavior than the two other sample groups.

More Urban children especially the eldest showed outward provocation when their belongings were taken by others.

While belongings were the first ranked cause of anger, interrelation with other people and restriction in play and other activities were the second and the third ranked causes of anger. The non-eldest children were more angered due to interaction with others and restrictions in their activities. Among the Urban Lower children, more of the non-eldest were angered by physical restriction but more of the eldest, by interpersonal problems.

Among the Rural children, more of the eldest were infuriated when other meddled with their property and more of the non-eldest showed anger due to restriction in activities.

It can be deduced that sibling use of their belongings caused eldest children to be angry. As a consequence, the non-eldest's play was restricted.

When angry, helpless as they were due to lack of knowledge to handle the situation, children cried (85%).Others, especially Rural children became physically aggressive on their mothers (39.7%), verbally aggressive on their mothers (36.6%) displayed temper tantrums (27%), or became bodily aggressive of objects (22%). Not only more boys than girls especially the eldest Urban boys were bodily aggressive on mothers but they too more than girls were verbally aggressive on mothers. More girls than boys cried and displayed temper tantrums.

When angry, the children (most of them from the Rural and Urban Middle) ran to their mothers for help. The next person whom they ran to was the father (most Urban children did this).

Behavior When Afraid - Fear like anger was manifested by all the children but only 5.6% (mostly Urban Lower children) were always in fear. 3.1% were afraid only occasionally.

Most children clang to their mothers or fathers when afraid. More of the boys than girls and more of the Rural children displayed this behavior.

Fear was caused by domestic animals, fantastic beings or ghosts, dark places and punishment. More Urban Lower and Rural children were more afraid of their parents than Urban Middle children. More Urban Lower and Rural children were somewhat quiet and motionless when afraid.

What might have contributed to the pleasing dispositions of the children or their showing anger, frustration and fear at very rare moments was the company of the mother and other members of the family who attended to their children's needs and were sensitive to the cues or signals related to such emotions. For instance, children slept in the same room with their parents or other members of the family. The mothers, were the main caretakers, but they were assisted by the fathers, grandparents, siblings,uncles and aunts or relatives to provide the nurturance and warmth.

If secure, safe and loved, the children leave this stage of development with courage, confidence, initiative to further explore the environment and in the years that follow, gain better mastery in assuming challenges in life.

Social Behavior - Generally, the children could get along with other children at play (most of them were the Urban Middle and Rural children, (85.4%) and 74% if the Urban Lower children. When children quarreled, 42.7% did not cry. Those who cried (30.6%) were mostly Urban Lower children. More aggressive behavior (71.3%) was shown than crying behavior. This was noted more among Urban Middle children and more girls than boys and more non-eldest than the eldest children. More of the Rural children would rather call for help. More girls than boys and more non-eldest than the eldest from the sample groups called their mothers for help.

At this tender age, most children had already acquired a sense of ownership when they got back their belongings from the others. When advised to return what was not theirs, they did so willingly.

More of the mothers especially the Urban Middle gave positive description of their children's health, mental development and traits such as alertness, being affectionate, obedience, etc. More of the Rural mothers than those of the two groups, on the other hand, perceived their children to be somewhat delayed in their development and therefore gave both positive and negative description of their children. In addition, the Rural parents hesitated in expressing a bright future for their children. The statements of the Urban Middle parents on a bright future for the children set the goals for which the parents had to work.

More girls than boys and more eldest children than non-eldest were perceived to have very good mental development.

More Urban Lower mothers than those from the two groups gave more negative description of their children.

The Urban Lower children seemed to be victims of graver circumstances than the two sample groups. Their families suffered from dislocation when they moved to the city to seek better jobs and expect a less harsh life. Their relatives and friends with similar motivations flocked to the city and found shelter with them and joined them to eke out a difficult life amidst a life of extravagance and ostentation of the elite. Furthermore, they suffered painful silence of indignities. As a result, more of the children of the Urban poor than the two sample groups did not give up easily when frustrated. They, however, faced more provocations to anger, were more fearful of objects, had greater problems with other children at play, cried when quarreling with other children and some were negatively described by their mothers as disorderly, having no control of themselves and got irritable.

More girls than boys cried often but they did not easily give up when frustrated. More girls displayed temper tantrums, called mother for help; were perceived to be very good in mental development; showed less body and verbal aggression to mothers. Less of the girls clang to the mothers when afraid.

The eldest more than the non-eldest became angry due to their belongings and interpersonal problems; while the non-eldest were more infuriated due to restriction in play. The eldest were more aggressive on their mothers and less of them would call for help. The eldest were perceived to have better mental development.

This final section analyzes the degree of independence of the children in the nine basic routine activities and their resistance to interference, enforcement and scolding. On the childern's ability to act without assistance in doing nine basic daily routine activities, the findings revealed that: 1. the children were fairly independent on all basic behaviors. They were highly independent in locomotion, eating, urinating and playing. They were, however, only moderately independent in taking off clothes, moving bowels, sleeping, and handwashing. They were dependent on putting on clothes. Independent behavior of boys and girls were nearly similar. There were no significant differences in the behavior of the eldest and the non-eldest.

2. When the mothers offered to help the child perform the 9 basic behavior patterns, the children either accepted the help or insisted on independently performing such basic skills by themselves. Half of the children were partially resistant to their mother's intereference to help them in the basic behaviors. In other words, half of the children insisted on eating, sleeping, etc, by themselves. There were no marked differences among the boys and the girls or among the eldest and non-eldest in their resistance to mother's help.

Among the three sample groups, the Urban Middle children were most resistant to interference in putting on clothes, as they were frequently expected to look clean and proper; the Urban Lower children were the most independent or ere most resistant to the mother's help especially when urinating and playing and/or doing other activities. They insisted on more freedom since they had less toys, lived in small crowded shanties/dwellings, without space for play. They resisted mother's help in using the toilets shared with others. The Rural children were the most conforming by accepting help especially in moving bowels since the pit type toilets were usually outside of their homes. Without the assistance of their mothers in washing their hands, they could play with water in spite of its scarcity. They therefore resisted mother's help.

3. When mothers insisted that their children do the routine activities by themselves (enforcement), the children showed average resistance to their mothers. More boys than girls and more eldest than non-eldest children demanded their mother's help. More of the Urban Middle children than those in the other two sample groups

insisted on their mother's help. They were more dependent on their mother's help as their mothers were more permissive or more informed about child-rearing. This is in contrast to the Rural mothers who give special attention to children aged between one and five years. Dependency among the Urban children continued up to the tenth year. (Jocano,1979)

4. When mothers scolded their children, (about 41.5 (mean score) the mothers indicated that they did not do so for improper behavior in relation to the 9 basic activities, the children's resistance to scolding was expressed by disobeying the mother or crying. It is noted that mothers very rarely scolded children at this age, but t children resented most was their being scolded for not washing their hands or for getting wet or for splashing water. If girls showed higher resistance to scolding than boys, it may be because mothers were tolerant of boys but more strict in the proper upbringing of girls.

The Urban Lower children were the most independent of the three groups because more of them resisted their mother's help and scolding. More of the Urban Middle children refused to perform the daily routine on their own but insisted that they be helped by their mothers. The Rural children were the least resistant because more of them accepted mother's help or did things by themselves as they were told to do and were more obedient when scolded.

Epilogue

The children were just beginning to manifest early signs of self-satisfaction for performing some tasks alone. What may be considered negative behavior are but children's strivings toward independence. Independence or autonomy, likewise, is an early sign of the child's will or having a mind of his own. Children's autonomy and mother's enforcement and scolding are to be viewed in Philippine context. In Philippine society, children are enjoyed, loved and are expected to seek help as a sign of closeness and affection. Although self-reliance is an emerging trait, generally, cooperation, sensitiveness to feelings and needs of others and acceptance that the young children be given time to grow leisurely are predominant concerns of the families. This study is based on the perception of mothers and such perceptions were what they want, to see. This behavior affected their child-rearing practices. Postponement of childhood, so to speak, which is more of the trend rather than rushing to the next stage of development has to be balanced by encouraging the young

children to explore their surroundings and interacting with them so that their growing up is accompanied by confidence and initiative.

Mother-child relationship is affected by the socio-economic circumstances and by the expectations and attitudes of society as reinforced by the mothers. The outcome of such relationship will contribute to the children's self-concept and emotional and social growth. How the children will behave in the latter years will likewise be influenced by their ability to arrive at rational decisions and by their sensitivity and strong will to translate to action, insights and understanding.

Recommendations:

1. Development of the countryside and Urban poor sections for more employment opportunities created to improve the quality of life in terms of better nutrition, safe water supply, more houses, education, health services and day care centers.

2. More non-formal education on child care shouldbe conducted to improve child-rearing practices, nutrition and healthy living.

3. Parents shouldnot be too lenient nor strict regarding their children's behavior. More time should be spent with the children. Parents need to show more interest in their children's activities and talk more with them and allow them to play with water to their hearts content in the river or bathroom.

4. More head start schools should be established to effectively plan preschool education.

5. Studies on mother-adolescent relationship should be conducted to understand the adolescents' problems in the home.

6. Studies on father-child and father-adolescent relationship should be conducted.

7. Cross-cultural studies should cover other Asian societies as well as non-Asian societies.

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